vol 46.

The certain and unchangeable Difference betwixt Moral Good and Evil.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the SOCIETIES for

Reformation of MANNERS,

AT

SALTERS-HALL;

ON

Monday the 3*d* of *July*, 1732.

Publiſhed at their Requeſt.

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LONDON;

Printed for EMAN. MATTHEWS, at the *Bible* in *Pater-noſter-Row*; and A. MILLAR, at *Buchanan*'s *Head* over-againſt St. *Clement*'s Church, in the *Strand*. M.DCC.XXXII.

(Price Six-pence.)

ISAIAH V. 20.

Wo unto them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs; that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter.

IT is too obvious to every one, how much vice and wickedneſs, of all ſorts, abound among us. This general corruption of manners is, no doubt, in a great meaſure to be imputed to wretched miſtakes and prejudices. Thoſe luſts by which Sinners are drawn away and enticed, muſt be exceedingly ſtrengthen'd by a depraved way of thinking; by confounding virtue with vice, or covering over vices with the appearance of commendable qualities: the influence of Principle, being thus added to the force of Inclination.

However, therefore, unable we may be to remedy other ſources of vice; we may, at leaſt, do ſomething towards the amendment of Sinners; if we can effectually convince them, "that there is a fix'd and "unchangeable difference betwixt moral Good and "Evil: that virtue has a natural tendency to the "happineſs and welfare, vice to the hurt and ruin, "of human ſociety, and of particular perſons."

If by ſuch concluſions, juſtly drawn from evident principles, we cannot effectually reconcile the hearts of ſinners to the commands of God, and to the yoke of the Redeemer; we may yet ſhow, that the prejudices they entertain, againſt the Divine Government as heavy and tyrannical, againſt the Laws

of God as arbitrary impoſitions, againſt the yoke of the Redeemer, as a grievous burden, are altogether groundleſs: ſeeing thoſe things which God requires of us, and which the Love of Jeſus recommends, are in their own nature good; even tho' they were not enforced by ſuch additional and engaging obligations.

Hence, alſo, it will plainly follow; that they who *ſtand up againſt evil doers*, and join together in uſing their beſt endeavours for promoting a Reformation of Manners, are moſt uſefully and laudably imployed: their endeavours, ſo far as they are influenced by ſincere and well-conducted aims at this valuable purpoſe, are exceeding beneficial to human Society; and may be ſo even to Sinners themſelves.

For which reaſons, being call'd to preach before the *Societies for Reformation of Manners*; I could not think of any more proper ſubject for me to inſiſt upon, than the eſtabliſhment of that principle, which both contains the beſt juſtification of their deſign, and is the foundation of the moſt proper arguments to perſuade Sinners themſelves to comply with it: namely, "that there is a natural and unalterable difference betwixt Moral Good and Evil; even ſetting aſide the conſideration of all Laws, either human or divine."

An attempt of this nature is the more requiſite; becauſe there have ariſen in theſe latter days *ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts*; revivers of the ſchemes and cavils of the ancient Scepticks, and worſt ſort of Epicureans: a ſet of men who, not ſatisfy'd with attacking the principles of revealed Religion and Chriſtianity, have ſet themſelves to oppoſe the common principles of natural Religion itſelf, acknowledged even by Heathens; nay, have endeavoured in a bold, and at the ſame time a ſhrewd and artful, manner to overturn the difference betwixt moral Good and Evil, to confound Virtue with Vice.

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To ſuch as theſe may the character and denunciation in my text be juſtly applied. *Wo to them*, &c.

Where, by the compariſon that is hinted betwixt thoſe who, in life and manners, *call evil good, and good evil*; and thoſe who *put darkneſs for light*, &c. it is plainly intimated,

"That the difference betwixt good and evil in "life and manners, is in itſelf as fix'd and certain; "as the difference betwixt light and darkneſs, a "bitter and ſweet taſte: the *one* no more depends "upon the meer will and pleaſure of any, than "the *other*."

This Principle I am now to endeavour, by divine aid, to illuſtrate. And that I may ſet the evidence of it before you in the cleareſt manner I can; let us endeavour to fix the meaning they can be ſuppoſed to have, who deny or call in queſtion the natural difference betwixt good and evil in the manners of men. It cannot, ſurely, be to aſſert, "that there "is no difference at all, in the nature of things, be-"twixt one kind of temper and behaviour and ano-"ther:" for *ſome* difference betwixt theſe evidently ariſes from the obvious and undeniable difference betwixt the objects of ſenſe themſelves. 'Tis, certainly, obvious that, if pleaſure and pain are naturally and unalterably different, the actions which cauſe the one and thoſe that cauſe the other, together with the diſpoſitions and affections from which ſuch actions naturally flow, muſt have as fix'd and unchangeable a difference betwixt them: if life and death, if health and ſickneſs, are in their own nature different things; ſure, wounding and healing, killing and preſerving life, muſt be as different Actions; love and hatred as different Affections.

To deny ſuch things as theſe, can ſcarce be ſuppoſed to be the meaning even of thoſe who call in queſtion the difference betwixt moral Good and Evil: but their intention, I ſuppoſe, muſt be to maintain; "that

" that there is no *ſuch* natural difference betwixt " theſe evidently different kinds of affections and " actions, as that the *one* can be call'd *good*, and the " *other evil*; in any other ſenſe, than as the *one* is " *obedience* to the *Laws* of ſome ſuperior, the *other* a " *tranſgreſſion* of them."

But, let us ſee again, what can be the meaning of this. Is it, " that it is in itſelf indifferent, with " reſpect to others, what way we are affected, or " behave towards them? or is it that it is indiffe- " rent to one's ſelf, how he is affected, or behaves " towards his neighbours and the publick?

But, certainly, it cannot, with any face of probability, be maintain'd; that one kind of temper and behaviour is not in its own nature *good*, and another *ill*, towards our neighbours and ſociety. Can it be ſaid to be *indifferent* to our neighbours, whether we do them good or ill; love them, or hate them? *indifferent* to ſociety, whether we be well or ill-affected to its intereſts; whether we behave towards it, as a good or an ill affection directs? This, ſure, is too plain a caſe to admit of any diſpute.

The main ſtrength, therefore, of thoſe who deny the natural difference betwixt moral Good and Evil, if they can be ſuppoſed to have any, muſt be reckoned to lie here.

" Allowing that different actions and affections " of ours have a different tendency to the good " or hurt of others, or of ſociety; yet, what is " that to us? How are we obliged to conſult the " good of others, and of the publick; or to re- " frain from doing them hurt, if we can compaſs " our own private advantage that way?"

In life and practice it is very obvious, that the ſtrongeſt oppoſition to ſuch a conſtant exerciſe of kind affections, as is moſt beneficial to others and ſociety, ariſes from an apprehended Self-intereſt interfering with them; from an apprehenſion that in

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acting otherwiſe, we conſult our own good, and enjoy our private advantage, however others may ſuffer by it.

It is, therefore, of the greateſt importance in this argument, to ſhow,

That it is not indifferent to ourſelves how we are affected, or how we behave towards others and the publick; but the ſame temper and conduct which is *beſt for them*, is likewiſe *beſt for ourſelves*, and moſt conducive to our true happineſs and enjoyment. For which purpoſe let us conſider,

I. To what temper and conduct ſome *Natural* Affections of our own hearts would lead us.

II. What temper and conduct our own minds, on a deliberate view, approve of: and in fine,

III. What temper and conduct, in the whole, is moſt conducive to our trueſt and greateſt enjoyment.

I. Let us conſider what temper and conduct, ſome Natural Affections of our own hearts would lead us to.

Let us reflect on the pain we naturally feel at the very firſt, in beholding any fellow-creature in great diſtreſs; the joy we naturally conceive in beholding others happy; the inclination we find in ourſelves oft-times to afford help to others, when occaſion offers; the ſenſe of gratitude we naturally feel on our firſt receiving a conſiderable obligation: let us reflect on what we may have felt or obſerved, of the Natural Affection of Parents towards their Off-ſpring, eſpecially in their moſt tender and helpleſs, which at the ſame time is their moſt troubleſome, condition. Are not all theſe evident ſymptoms of ſome *good-will* to others, *natural* to our frame?

Some there may be, indeed, who, by habitually abandoning themſelves to the government of ſome violent paſſions or narrow ſelfiſhneſs, have ſuppreſs'd,

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in a great meaſure, all ſuch ſocial feeling in themſelves; and 'tis no wonder if ſuch as theſe be *aſham'd* to own any movements of the heart to be *natural*, which they are *willing*, and even at pains, to diveſt themſelves of; and averſe to allow of any greater portion of kindneſs and goodneſs among men, than they care to cheriſh in themſelves. But what ſhould induce others, who are under no ſuch byaſs, to belye their own hearts; and explain away their moſt natural affections, by reſolving them into a train of reflections they are not conſcious to themſelves of when they feel them? unleſs it be an unaccountable fondneſs for an hypotheſis, which is liked for its fancied eaſineſs, being imagin'd a pretty knack of reſolving all the movements of the human heart into one ſingle principle: for ſuch is the tale of ſome modern Philoſophers: "When we "ſee others happy, or in pain, we immediately ima-"gine the caſe our own; and tranſporting ourſelves "by a ſort of imperceptible magick into their cir-"cumſtances, 'tis for ourſelves meerly we feel the "joy or pain, which we flatter ourſelves ariſes from "a concern for others: Parents conſider their young "ones as parts of themſelves (no doubt, the brute creatures do ſo too!)" and ſo their affection for them, "and concern about them, is a mere exerciſe of ſelf-"love." Curious Philoſophy! might theſe ingenious Gentlemen be but allowed the uncommon privilege of coining Natural-Hiſtory; but if not,

I may appeal to every one, whether the ſenſe of joy he has in beholding others happy, or his ſympathizing pain in viewing their diſtreſſes, are not frequently obſerved to ariſe as immediately in his heart, upon diſcerning the ſymptoms of their happineſs or diſtreſs; as any other affection ariſes immediately, upon its proper object being preſented to us? Whether the ſenſe of joy or grief, by way of ſympathy, is not oft-times evidently perceived to prevent

prevent any reflection on his own caſe; and even to dwell for ſome time upon the mind, before it is heighten'd by ſuch a reflexion, as that the caſe of the perſon we ſee in joy or pain might be our own? And, how ſhould the imagination, that the caſe of the afflicted perſon *may be* our own, when we know it is not, give us any concern for another; eſpecially ſuch a concern as we don't ſeek to get rid of, but by removing the calamity of another that rais'd it? What ſhould hinder us, after the firſt uneaſineſs ſuppoſed to ariſe from the imagination of the caſe being our own was over, inſtead of feeling any ſympathizing pain in another's calamity, to uſe the view of it rather to give an acceſſion to our joy, that the caſe is otherwiſe with us? We may, indeed, find ourſelves obliged ſometimes to ſuppoſe ourſelves in the caſe of the afflicted, in order to give us a more lively ſenſe of what he feels, and how heavy the diſtreſs lies upon him: but, certainly, it will not follow from this; that a ſympathy, which requires no more to raiſe it than a full ſenſe of another's diſtreſs, is a concern rather for *ourſelves* than for *him*. Again: does not the inclination to afford help to others, exert itſelf ſometimes as immediately, upon occaſions for it preſenting themſelves; as any other of our moſt natural appetites and inclinations? Is it not a moſt natural movement of the heart, in all diſintereſted caſes? Nay, is it not often felt to overcome an apprehended ſelf-intereſt; and make us forget a concern for ourſelves; particularly on occaſions of ſudden danger to others? In fine, is not the natural affection of parents towards their children oft-times felt and ſeen to prevent reaſon and out-run deliberation? Is it not frequently exerciſed in the ſtrongeſt and moſt tender manner, without the leaſt thought of *their children being parts of themſelves*.

'Tis ſtrange to obſerve what pains ſome are at to reſolve every affection of the human heart into, either a raſh and haſty, or a cool and deliberate, Selfiſhneſs: nor can I think it would be any thing more abſurd and unaccountable, if one ſhould take it in his head to reſolve our Self-love into Social affection. Sure I am, that oft-times the reliſh of theſe enjoyments, which are reckon'd moſt to belong to private ſatisfaction and to be ſought out of meer ſelf-love, ariſes more from ſomething of a ſocial ſenſe, and ſome reference to others either real or imagin'd ſharers in them; than from any thing elſe: and the groſſeſt treſpaſſes againſt the general welfare of human ſociety, and thoſe crimes that are moſt hurtful to particular perſons, will be found commonly owing more to a narrow and miſguided ſocial affection, an attachment to the intereſt of ſome particular Society with which one is connected, either by his circumſtances or by choice; than to meer ſelf-intereſt. And who is there that would not gain any advantage to himſelf, rather *without* than *with* the hurt of any other; if he thought it might as certainly and eaſily be compaſs'd either way; and was equally free from any apprehenſion of danger to himſelf, in *either* caſe?

Now let us conſider what is the evident natural tendency of thoſe kind Affections, of which ſuch plain ſymptoms are to be diſcerned in our own hearts: whither would they lead us; if they were not check'd by other paſſions ariſing from, or cheriſh'd by, apprehenſions of Intereſt? And, ſeeing the good and welfare of others is the *immediate and direct* object of theſe affections; their natural bent, unleſs by ſome foreign influence reſtrain'd, muſt be after the higheſt pitch and greateſt extent of *that good: Love worketh no ill to one's neighbour*; but muſt prompt us to do all the good we can; and lead us to a hearty good-will to all mankind, nay to the

the whole ſyſtem of rational Beings; and a good affection to an univerſal Adminiſtration, by which we conceive the general happineſs is ſecured. 'Tis indeed of the nature of this *kind Affection*, as appears by ſeveral natural ſymptoms of it, that it be more particularly exerciſed towards thoſe to whom we have ſpecial opportunities of doing good, thoſe with whom we are join'd by peculiar ties: and this is very agreeable to the univerſal extent of it; for it is by being kind more particularly to *them*, that every one moſt directly contributes, in his place, to the general welfare; provided always that this ſpecial kindneſs be exerciſed agreeable to an univerſal good-will, and no peculiar ties make us forget the common ties of humanity.

From what has been ſaid on this argument, we may conclude, that we gratify *a natural inclination* of our hearts, in *doing good to others*; as well as *in doing well for ourſelves:* that we run croſs to a natural bent of our hearts, in neglecting to do good, or in doing hurt to others; as well as in neglecting what belongs to our own welfare, or doing harm to ourſelves. Which of theſe two Affections, Self-love or Benevolence, 'tis beſt for us to gratify; need not be a queſtion, unleſs they are inconſiſtent and come in competition: nor is there, in reality, any place for it; if theſe two Affections, conducted by juſt views of what belongs to our own and other men's welfare, are perfectly harmonious, and are beſt gratified together. And whether this is not really the caſe, may afterwards appear. But, let us now conſider,

II. What temper and conduct our own minds, on a deliberate view, approve.

In like manner, as no ſooner the Eye opens and turns upon certain figures, but they pleaſe as beautiful; ſo, the eye of the Mind no ſooner opens

upon, or is preſented with the view of, certain actions and the ſymptoms of certain affections; but we approve of one kind, as fair and amiable; condemn another, as foul and deform'd. The good and kind, the generous and grateful, the pious and devout part (eſpecially where the devotion partakes moſtly of love and reſignation to the perfection of goodneſs and wiſdom) is always approv'd; and the contrary condemn'd.

The good character may indeed have the appearance of its contrary ſo artfully caſt on it, that the mind may be miſled to condemn it; and the bad one may be ſo diſguiſed with the appearance of goodneſs, that the mind may be drawn to approve it: and 'tis only this way that the judgment of the mind can be miſled; tho' by intereſt, or the force of paſſion, or habit, one may be led to act contrary to the judgment of his mind. But goodneſs, or the ſhew of it, always gains the approbation of the mind, appears amiable, and is view'd with pleaſure: and nothing elſe can render a character amiable.

No circumſtances of diſtreſs can deface the beauty and amiableneſs of that fair and engaging character in which Goodneſs is the prevailing quality: on the contrary, the beauty of Virtue ſupports itſelf under a cloud; nay, ſhines with a peculiar luſtre amidſt ſurrounding calamities. There cannot be on earth a more engaging ſight, than to behold a good man, ſteddily keeping up to that character amidſt the greateſt diſtreſſes; maintaining a noble ſtruggle with adverſe occurrences; and holding on his well-choſen courſe, amidſt the hardeſt tryals! How natural is it to be intereſted in ſuch a character; and ſhare in all his ſufferings! Yet, tho' we could wiſh him more proſperous, we would not have him ſo at the expence of forgoing one tittle of his ſteddy virtue; but would rather ſee him as he is, than in a more

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eaſy condition with ſuch a loſs to his character. On the other hand, is not ſucceſsful villany always beheld with abhorrence and indignation?

Suppoſe we neither receive, nor expect, the leaſt benefit from the exerciſe of the good man's virtue; ſtill we behold it with approbation: ſuch amiable characters pleaſe, not only when ſeen in life, and in our own time; but even when barely repreſented to the fancy; or read of, as having appeared long ago, and in remote corners of the world. Nay, our having received the greateſt benefits, will not make the character of him who beſtows them appear amiable, unleſs as it gives us a view of goodneſs in his nature and diſpoſition, exciting him to this beneficence; if otherwiſe, and we know that he beſtows theſe benefits from ſome ſiniſter principle, or out of mere regard to ſelf-intereſt, we ſhall not *eſteem* him, even while we *thank* him. Nor will our receiving the greateſt hurt, make the character of him who produces it appear odious, unleſs the miſchief he does appears to us to proceed from hatred, or ſome paſſion contrary to goodneſs. Nor would our being conſiderable gainers by one's wickedneſs and knavery, hinder us from condemning the ill character: 'tis a common ſaying in ſuch caſes, that people *love the treaſon, but hate the traitor*; but the real fact would be more exactly expreſs'd by ſaying, that they *love* the *fruits of the treaſon*, but *hate* the *treaſon itſelf*; ſeeing 'tis for no other reaſon they hate the traitor.

Goodneſs is always amiable, according to the degree and prevalency of it in any character. 'Tis therefore in the higheſt degree amiable, in its utmoſt perfection: nor can we imagine a greater perfection of beauty and a more proper object of the higheſt delight, than "a Being, in whom perfect "and unalterable goodneſs is join'd with Almighty "Power and unbounded Wiſdom, Eternity, and

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" Omnipreſence; who is the fair and unſpotted " Original and Pattern of Goodneſs; and the Foun- " tain of all good." So that the *higheſt Love of God* is the proper and natural exerciſe of this principle, the *Love of Goodneſs*.

This ſenſe of the beauty and amiableneſs of Goodneſs muſt particularly prompt us to ſtudy what is thus fair and amiable *in ourſelves*; and avoid what is ugly and odious. This ſenſe of Beauty and Deformity in life and manners, as it has a particular reſpect to our own affections and actions, is commonly call'd CONSCIENCE: for, at the ſame time that we are conſcious to ourſelves of what paſſes in our minds and what we do, and naturally have ſome remembrance of it and reflexion upon it afterwards; this conſciouſneſs and review naturally preſents to us our temper and actions, under an agreeable or odious appearance. This ſenſe of beauty and deformity in our own affections and actions, ſecretly admoniſhes us what to do, and what to avoid; and therefore was by the noble Ancients conſidered as an *inward Monitor*; and repreſented as the *Governing Principle* in our frame: and 'tis with reſpect to this inward Monitor, that the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles ſays, *Rom.* ii. 14, 15. that, *the Gentiles which have not the Law, do by Nature the things contained in the Law; and theſe having not the Law, are a Law unto themſelves: which ſhew the work of the Law written in their hearts; their conſciences alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing, or elſe excuſing one another.* Thus has the Wiſe and Good Author of our frame given us more *immediate* notices what to do and avoid; than thoſe that are got by deductions of Reaſon, by maxims and rules form'd as the reſult of a long train of argument: and hence it is, that many men's firſt thoughts are their beſt, in theſe matters; thoſe dictates of their conſciences which prevent a delibe-

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rate enquiry, are oft-times more juſt than thoſe conclusions that are the reſult of a deliberation, on which appetite or miſtaken intereſt have a great influence. And Conſcience not only dictates to us what to do or avoid; but prompts us to what is Good, and reſtrains us from what is Evil; and makes continual efforts to govern and direct our conduct: 'tis a plain and obvious indication of this Effort of Conſcience; that it naturally interpoſes its judgment, without our ſetting ourſelves deliberately to conſult it; nor will it ſuffer us to act contrary to its dictates, without checking and reproving us, and rendering us uneaſy; till, by repeated and even violent ſtruggles with it, and a cuſtom of diſregarding it, Men ſtifle and ſuppreſs thoſe checks; and, even thus, the moſt abandon'd are not able to ſilence it altogether.

From all this, 'tis evident, that we act contrary to our own Senſe of things, and render ourſelves deform'd and odious to ourſelves; when we act contrary to the bent of univerſal Benevolence, or of Love and reſignation to the Deity. Let us now ſee,

III. How the matter ſtands with reſpect to our Intereſt, rightly underſtood; and whether *that* would not likewiſe lead us to the ſame Temper and Conduct which kind affections prompt us to, and which our minds approve as fair and amiable? Whether the moſt extenſive Goodneſs, and Self-love conducted by juſt views of our beſt enjoyment, are not perfectly harmonious; and 'tis only the report of deceitful ſpies that can raiſe a difference, or diſſenſion, betwixt them.

However forward many are to make their eſtimate of happineſs from the viſible affluence of outward means of the gratification of Senſe and Appetite; yet this way of reckoning is no leſs falſe, than 'tis commonly unfavourable to Virtue. Methinks

a very eaſy reflection on our own frame, or even a ſlight attention to our experience, might ſuffice to convince us; that our happineſs depends far more on the temper of our minds, and what we *are* ourſelves, than on our outward poſſeſſions and what we *have*; and our greateſt and moſt ſteddy joys ariſe rather from our inward Affections, than from the greateſt abundance of outward things: and pray, of what worth to us, is the largeſt *poſſeſſion* of outward things; but according to the inward *enjoyment* they afford us? But the foundation of any inward enjoyment muſt be laid in the *temper* of the Mind itſelf: a Mind ruffled and diſcompoſed will mar our pleaſure of any ſort; and render us uncapable of any enjoyment, had we ever ſo great an affluence of the outward means of that enjoyment.

It may, perhaps, on a ſuperficial view of the matter, be thought; that, as we are creatures endowed with various paſſions and appetites, our greateſt enjoyment muſt lie in the gratifying of them all; or, if we cannot gratify them all at once, 'tis beſt to follow the ſway of any of them that chances to be uppermoſt, without giving ourſelves the trouble to bring them under any government, but permitting their free and unconfin'd courſe, without controul; and they may be indifferently reckon'd happy, who pleaſe themſelves in the gratification of any of them; nor is there any rule for diſtinguiſhing in this caſe, ſeeing men's *taſtes* of enjoyment *differ*. But, the very obvious obſervation, "that "all our appetites cannot be gratified at once; and "that the indulging ſome, and to a certain pitch, "unavoidably interferes with the gratifying of "others;" muſt lead us to be ſenſible of the neceſſity of ſome rule in this caſe. For, let it be allowed that, as no natural paſſion was form'd in vain, they are all to be gratify'd, as far as they can conſiſtently: yet, let *taſtes differ* as they will, I think

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it will hardly be denied by any one, who reflects ever ſo little on his own experience; that the gratifying of ſome appetites and affections affords him greater ſatisfaction than gratifying others, which have perhaps been felt equally ſtrong, but in complying with which he has found himſelf miſerably diſappointed of the enjoyment he promiſed himſelf. This very obſervation muſt lead us to this Rule in gratifying our Appetites; that, "if we would have any ſettled and laſting enjoy-"ment, and have the greateſt ſatisfaction we can "in life, we muſt guard againſt indulging any one "appetite or paſſion, ſo as to interfere with ano-"ther which will afford us greater and more laſt-"ing enjoyment." To keep this due ballance amongſt our inward Affections, muſt be the only method for the happineſs of Life. Paſſion and Appetite are in themſelves but blind guides; and we ſhall be oft-times and groſſly deceived, if we judge what is *beſt* for us, by the meer ſtrength of Deſire, or Affection. Thoſe natural appetites which lead us after the things that belong to our private advantage, are, no doubt, good and uſeful, when conducted by juſt views of what belongs to our welfare; but if we permit them to ſwell to the utmoſt pitch, and take their fulleſt ſwing, without any direction or controul; they will fruſtrate their proper purpoſe, with regard to our own welfare; and will work into paſſions perfectly unnatural; being ſuch as conduce no more to our private advantage, than to the good of others; but the ſtronger they grow, will the more effectually prove inward ſources of perpetual diſturbance and diſtreſs to us: ſo that, in the iſſue, this fancied *Liberty* will introduce the moſt wretched *Slavery*.

It would, therefore, be well for us, if, inſtead of imploying our chief care about the happineſs of life, in enquiring what outward things are *beſt* for us (by the rule of being *moſt ſuitable to our Appetites)* and eagerly purſuing after them; we be-

ſtowed more of our pains in conſidering what appetites and affections were *beſt* for us to cheriſh in ourſelves; and would heartily bend our endeavours to improve theſe in our minds, and be more conſtantly imployed in exerciſing them.

If there are certain Affections which, in their own nature and exerciſe,

(1.) Afford the greateſt *inward* Enjoyment;

(2.) Put us in ſpecial circumſtances of advantage, for obtaining the moſt conſiderable *outward* means of ſatisfaction; and,

(3.) Preſerve our minds in that diſpoſition, which is requiſite to give us a reliſh of any Enjoyment:

If, on the other hand, the impairing of this temper, or the prevalency of a contrary one, tends to give us inward pain and diſturbance; and renders us uncapable of enjoyment, even amidſt the greateſt affluence of the outward means of it:

Then, it muſt always be *our true Intereſt*, to cheriſh and exerciſe that Diſpoſition which is the inward foundation of ſteady Enjoyment; and to check and cure every branch of that Diſpoſition which is the inward ſource of woe and diſturbance.

Let us then enquire,

(1.) What Affections they are, the exerciſe of which affords the greateſt *inward* Enjoyment. And may I not appeal to all who have ever felt in themſelves any thing of the exerciſe of kind and ſocial Affections, Love, Compaſſion, Generoſity or Gratitude; whether the exerciſe of them is not naturally accompanied with the greateſt Delight? They afford an original joy, which does not require any preceding pain, to raiſe it, or give it a reliſh. The pleaſure of thoſe paſſions which reſpect our private advantage is, in a great meaſure, confin'd to the *gratification* of them; they give us pain, when we cannot gratify them: but, even when love and compaſſion are unſucceſsful, ſtill we are pleaſed to feel them

them ſtirring and prevailing in our hearts: and, even when theſe *kind affections* lead us through a ſeries of anxiety and concern, pity and ſympathy, there is a ſecret pleaſure attending thoſe diſturbances; we hug and indulge them, and are unwilling to be deprived of them any way, but by a Joy ariſing from the Succeſs of thoſe for whom we were concern'd, the relief of thoſe whom we pitied. Far more are theſe Affections delightful when ſucceſsful; when we actually afford help and ſuccour, beſtow benefits, and ſpread happineſs around us. The more large and extenſive the exerciſe of the kind affections is; the greater is the joy accompanying it: how great the joy of a generous and extenſive good Affection to the univerſal Well of the whole rational World? eſpecially if, from a perſuaſion of the care of an Univerſal Governour, who is perfectly wiſe and powerful, as well as good, we are ſatisfied that this general happineſs is ſecured and taken care of, amidſt all changes and revolutions, and all *ſeeming* or *partial and temporary* mixtures of *Evil* in the preſent imperfect and unfiniſhed ſtate of things: what joy muſt this naturally afford a good man? What chearful *reſignation* muſt it inſpire, as to every thing that belongs to his own particular intereſt for the preſent, which is ſwallowed up in the Univerſal Good, in which he is ſatisfied he ſhall find his own greateſt enjoyment? What delight and joy does the devout mind feel, in contemplating and adoring the amiable Perfections of God? eſpecially when thus animated to form his own mind and conduct more and more after the Model of that exalted pattern of moral excellence! How delightful to view His extenſive Goodneſs; to contemplate the Wiſdom of His conduct; to conſider one's ſelf as a true member and ſubject of His kingdom, and under the care of that Almighty King! What delight does the generous heart feel, in ſharing the joys of others, and

beholding them happy; eſpecially when 'tis by his own means, and when he receives a new and repeated ſenſe of happineſs from the ſymptoms of that joy himſelf has produced? Tho' we leſſen our *ſhare* of outward things by communicating them; yet the *enjoyment* is heighten'd by this Participation. Such are the ſatisfactions that *immediately* accompany the exerciſe of kind and pious affections.

This pleaſure is exceedingly heighten'd by the approbation of the conſcious Mind, and by the fair and amiable appearance of theſe good Affections. The pleaſure of kind affections is not confin'd to the immediate exerciſe; as the pleaſures of ſenſe, for the moſt part, are; but remains in the mind; and returns every time we review the amiable affections, every time we look back on the good actions done. What tranquillity and enjoyment ariſes from Peace of Mind *! Can we imagine a greater, and more ſteady joy, than flows from a conſtant ſeries of eaſy and ſelf-approving reflections, in which vanity and partial fondneſs have no ſhare; but that temper and conduct the mind approves in one's ſelf, would be equally approv'd wherever beheld? What further ſatisfaction muſt it afford the mind of a good man, that, as a conduct ſo beneficial and ſo amiable tends to procure a fair reputation, and recommends to general eſteem; he is conſcious to himſelf of the deſerv'd eſteem and love of others? He enjoys, not their feign'd applauſes or partial commendations; but their juſt eſteem, their hearty love and gratitude. What a tranſcendent delight to look upon himſelf as approv'd by the great and good Governour of the World, who *loves goodneſs and righteouſneſs?* The very conſciouſneſs of acting under the view and approbation of ſuch a perfect Judge of excellency, by whom *actions are* juſtly *weigh'd*, what Joy muſt it afford!

Such

* Prov. 3. 17. Iſa. 32. 17.

Such are the inward enjoyments of a good and pious mind. But, let us conſider,

(2.) What circumſtances of advantage theſe kind and pious affections put us in, for obtaining the moſt conſiderable *outward* means of ſatisfaction. Religion and virtue not only allow us, but oblige us, to uſe all methods of induſtry, for procuring outward advantages, that are conſiſtent with piety and goodneſs: and theſe honeſt arts are found, in experience, to be the ſureſt ways of thriving; when violence and oppreſſion are ſoon diſappointed of their purpoſe, and no arts of fraud and deceit can hold out long *. Piety and goodneſs alſo afford a peculiar ſecurity for the peaceable acquiſition and poſſeſſion of outward things; as they tend to procure us the good-will and aſſiſtance of others about us, and to ſecure us from their jealouſy and oppoſition †. Let us conſider,

(3.) What a reliſh kind and pious affections tend to give us for *any* enjoyment. A mind free from inward bitterneſs and diſguſt, and from all uneaſy and paining reflections, is, in ſome meaſure, neceſſary to our ſatisfaction of any ſort, or from any thing. Now 'tis the excerciſe of kind affections, that moſt effectually baniſhes all thoſe fretful and galling paſſions, which ruffle the temper and diſturb the mind; and produces that inward peace and tranquillity, which is neceſſary to any true enjoyment. Temperance and Sobriety, in governing our private affections and deſires, do moſt directly, and naturally contribute to our bodily health and ſtrength; and alſo to our inward eaſe, and the contentment of our minds; without which, there can be no enjoyment: nor is this inward quiet and tranquillity to be obtained by the greateſt abundance of outward things; the moſt affluent ſtate being found

* Prov. 10. 9. and 12. 19. † 1 Pet. 3. 13.

found the moſt expoſed to the greateſt diſturbances from every little croſs accident, or diſappointment. It will be found in experience, that the greateſt enjoyment, and moſt lively reliſh of the gratifications of ſenſe themſelves, is to be obtained and preſerv'd by ſuch a moderate and temperate uſe of them, as is conſiſtent with piety and goodneſs, and does not interfere with the enjoyments of a higher kind already mention'd. And thus we have conſidered, what a natural foundation of happineſs and enjoyment piety and goodneſs is. But,

On the other hand: the workings of ſuch irregular paſſions as are contrary to piety and goodneſs, together with the uneaſy reflections which attend them, make up the greateſt miſery. The workings of anger, envy, reſentment, revenge, and the like unſocial paſſions, raiſe moſt violent tumults, and produce inward torments, in a man's own breaſt: they render the mind ugly and deform'd, ſo that it cannot bear the view of itſelf; and, when in their height and ſtrength, they ſo poſſeſs the ſoul, as to exclude every relieving thought: they toſs a man out of one ſtate of inward torment into another; from the torment of *reſentment* till the paſſion is gratify'd, to the tortures of *remorſe* quickly ſucceeding the unnatural gratification. Other ſelfiſh paſſions have a more flattering and agreeable appearance: but, as all the pleaſure of them depends upon the gratification of them, how liable are we to be diſappointed in that purſuit? And how great is the anguiſh of that diſappointment oft-times felt; eſpecially if no relief ariſes from enjoyments of a better kind? And, ſo far as theſe paſſions lead us aſide from the paths of goodneſs, and carry us to any thing hurtful to others; it may be evident, from what has been already obſerv'd, that they deprive us of greater enjoyments, than the gratification of them will afford, and expoſe

poſe us to greater woes than can be compenſated by it. Impiety and neglect of God deprive us of all thoſe enjoyments and comforts, which ariſe from a regard to his Being and Providence; and which are found of the greateſt uſe to relieve the mind, when it ſtands in ſpecial need of ſupport. How uneaſy and diſturb'd muſt his mind oft-times be, in ſuch a mixed ſtate of things as the preſent, and under ſuch diſaſters as all men are unavoidably expos'd to, who is regardleſs of the hand of a wiſe and good Providence; or frets and murmurs under the Diſpenſations of it? And how can he miſs to be often expos'd to fretfulneſs and murmuring under many outward events; who, inſtead of ſeeking his happineſs in thoſe *inward enjoyments*, which no outward changes can rob him of againſt his will; has his heart ſo bent on his own *outward affairs*, that he is regardleſs of the welfare of others, and the general good?

Further: what inward pain, and remorſe, muſt naturally accompany that remembrance of his own temper, and reflection upon his actions, which a wicked and impious man cannot miſs to have? Who can expreſs the anguiſh of his mind, who cannot reflect on his temper and conduct, but he beholds in himſelf ſomething horrid and ſhocking? who ſees himſelf juſtly deſpiſed and hated by thoſe about him? What terrors muſt ſeize his mind, who is fill'd with a juſt ſenſe of the diſpleaſure of Heaven? which a wicked man may well be in fear of, even from God's love of goodneſs and of the welfare of his creation, tho' there was no expreſs denunciation of it. How diſturb'd muſt be the condition of his ſoul, who is continually haunted by the Specters of his guilt; and oft-times fill'd with juſt fears, both from men and from the Deity, and even with imaginary ones? What enjoyment can ſuch a one have, even in the moſt flattering circumſtances of fortune, and amidſt

amidſt the greateſt abundance of outward things! This is the *natural* portion of a wicked and vicious man.

It may perhaps be thought, that, however *in the main* a benevolent and pious temper and behaviour tends to our greateſt enjoyment; yet, *in ſome particular caſes*, it may be our intereſt to act a contrary part. It muſt be own'd, that one may gain ſome particular outward advantages, by forſaking the ways of piety and goodneſs; and may ſuſtain ſome outward loſſes, by adhering to them: and yet this is far from being ſo often the caſe; as one under the government of fancy and appetite may, from *their* ſuggeſtions, be induced to think. But theſe *outward advantages*, obtain'd by any vicious action, are always attended with an *inward loſs*, which is not to be compenſated by them; as *outward loſſes* attending the exerciſe of piety and goodneſs, are accompany'd with *inward advantage and improvement*. Every deviation from the paths of goodneſs breaks in upon that tone and turn of the temper, which is the inward foundation of tranquillity and happineſs; and introduces ſuch a diſorder and corruption into the mind, as we know not where it may ſtop: every partial diſorder within tends to an univerſal one, and is a part of it; and is naturally accompany'd with part of the miſchief flowing from it, tho' it may not be ſo plainly felt at the firſt: every known and wilful departure from the paths of uprightneſs, muſt make way for inward reproach and remorſe: nor can any one know what length the miſchief may go he does himſelf, when he ventures to break that peace of mind, which he knows not when, or if ever, he ſhall wholly recover: and he who ventures all this loſs, for any outward gains, makes but a ſad bargain: even in this ſenſe, there is a great deal of force in that warm and home queſtion of our Saviour;

What

What is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?* 'Tis a vain imagination to think, that if we adhere to goodneſs and honeſty, in moſt inſtances, we may ſafely adventure to deviate from it *in ſome:* this is to make life a perpetual inconſiſtency. What ſettled peace can there be within; what regular tranquillity; what ſteddy enjoyment in life; when one's heart is divided, and he is at perpetual variance with himſelf, condemning at one time what he approves at another? The only way to ſettled peace and undiſturbed enjoyment, is by ſteddy uprightneſs; by *one* fix'd and conſiderate reſolution; which, once well form'd, muſt be ſteddily kept to, and all the paſſions and appetites brought under ſubjection to it.

I thought it needful to be at the more pains to ſtate this matter fully and clearly; becauſe leſſening the *preſent and natural* advantages of piety and goodneſs, and magnifying its preſent diſtreſſes, is not only a thing induſtriouſly labour'd at by the enemies to the cauſe of virtue and goodneſs; but they are even ſeconded in this attempt, unwarily I hope, by ſome who have thought, it ſeems, to ſerve the cauſe of Religion and Revelation, by repreſenting the preſent condition of virtue as moſt melancholy and calamitous; and with this prepoſterous view have join'd in the cry of *calling the proud happy*; and ſetting forth the ſtate of proſperous vice as a condition to be envy'd, "were it not for the awe "of a *hard maſter*, who, it ſeems, grudges us this "happineſs!" But, what is there that ſhould lead us to ſuch unfavourable views of the *preſent portion* of piety and goodneſs? Is it the ſhare good men have in the common calamities of human life? But ſure theſe do not more befall good men than bad men: the moſt that can be ſaid of them is, that they fall *promiſcuouſly* on the good and bad: a circumſtance

* Matt. 16. 26.

which may hinder the *difference* betwixt them, from being ſo *conſpicuous* to all the world, but that the conſideration of the wiſdom and goodneſs of the Univerſal Governour, may afford us ground to expect it ſhall one day be more ſo; and this may render a Revelation, which aſſures us it ſhall be ſo, on that account, highly credible: yet ſure this can never make the preſent condition of a good man in any reſpect worſe, than that of a bad man; ſeeing common calamities fall equally upon both; and cannot, certainly, lie ſo heavy on the good man as on the other, but muſt ſit eaſier and lighter upon him, ſo far as he is in the exerciſe of his piety and goodneſs. Is it, then, the peculiar hardſhips and ſufferings good men endure, on account of their goodneſs, or for adhering to a cauſe which their virtue obliges them to maintain, that makes us think ſo unfavourably of their preſent condition? But, have they not their peculiar ſupports too? There is a *ſtrength and force*, as well as beauty, belonging to piety and goodneſs, ſo far as they prevail in the temper and conduct, whence the name of *Virtue* is deriv'd to them: the joys they afford tend to ſtrengthen the temper; and give a force to the mind, to bear up under oppoſitions and hardſhips: there is a firmneſs and ſteddineſs, that is of their very nature; and a great deal of their proper exerciſe lies in forbearing pleaſures, and enduring pains, in the maintenance of a ſteddy reſolution, in preſerving that temper and keeping up to that conduct in which the ſoul finds its greateſt enjoyment. 'Tis not, certainly, any loſs or hardſhip that may be ſuſtained in ſuch a noble courſe, that can lie heavy upon *his* mind, who conſiders theſe as befalling him not without the ſovereign diſpoſal of a perfectly wiſe and good Maſter, who ſees meet ſo to exerciſe him; who regards them as the appointed tryal of his Virtue, by which it is to be exerciſed,

exercised, brightned, and improv'd; who considers the losses he bravely sustains, and the sufferings which with a steddy mind he endures, as the price at which he purchases strength and freedom of mind, and the mastery of himself; greater firmness and constancy in a good cause; and consequently an enjoyment of inward peace and satisfaction, yet more uninterrupted, and more above the reach of disturbance! But, suppose the sufferings of a good man come to the greatest extremity, and he endures the sharpest persecutions? Why, this is far from being so often the case, as may be imagin'd: for ordinary, a man's piety and goodness itself affords him a peculiar security against the ill-will or the ill designs of others: 'tis commonly from lust of worldly power or wealth, that the violence of persecutors arises; and 'tis, at least, an imagin'd opposition of worldly interests, that makes the good man fall under it; while his being on the side to which his virtue obliges him to adhere, (but which his persecutors, perhaps, call heresy) is but the pretended cause of their persecuting him; and were this pretence wanting, others might be found to patronize that cruelty and oppression, which, in reality, has its rise from other causes. And, in the case of such sufferings, even setting aside future rewards, a good man may have the prospect of a great deal of good to be done by his firmly enduring them; to which with pleasure he sacrifices private advantages; and even, perhaps, a *life*, which, prolong'd with the abandoning so glorious a cause, must be to him a wretched and miserable one. And, if 'tis most delightful to behold a good man maintaining a noble struggle with adversity, and holding on his well-chosen course amidst the worst shocks of calamity; what a vast joy must it be, for a man's own mind to applaud him, as the good and steddy man, firm and unmov'd in the best of

cauſes! If *peradventure for one good man ſome would even dare to die**; muſt not a truly good man die, with pleaſure, for the good of mankind, or of his country; or for the advantage of that cauſe, which he looks upon as the cauſe of God, and of the happineſs of mankind? And, all the while, in the unequal compariſon that is made betwixt the preſent condition of a good and bad man, there ſeems to be very little account made of the *peculiar calamities* which attend *the vicious*, and that commonly in the moſt proſperous outward circumſtances; calamities far *greater*, as they immediately affect the mind and ſoul; and which more *conſtantly* attend the vicious, as ariſing from the inward temper itſelf; than any outward calamities which *ſometimes* befall the good and virtuous. Did we fairly take the *inward* condition, as well as *outward* circumſtances, both of the good and bad into the account, we might ſee abundant ground to conclude; not only that, ſuppoſing both on an equal footing as to outward things, there could be no queſtion which had the greateſt enjoyment: but alſo that, ſuppoſing the bad man had commonly the advantage in outward reſpects, yet the inward enjoyments of a good man will compenſate his outward loſſes and afflictions; whereas the greateſt affluence of outward things will not compenſate the want of inward peace: and, however dazling an appearance the ſplendour of greatneſs, the elevations of fortune, and the blandiſhments of ſenſe, may make to thoſe who look only on the outſide of things; they can afford but very ſlender enjoyment to one void of peace within, diſturb'd by the workings of irregular paſſions and the remorſes of a guilty mind.

So that Piety and Virtue is, in its own nature, always, the Good; and Vice the Ill; of every man: that temper and conduct which is *beſt* for *others* about us; is alſo *beſt* for *ourſelves*: and ſo far as we are

* Rom. 5. 7.

are wanting to promote the good of our neighbours and of mankind; we are ſo far wanting to ourſelves, and ceaſe to promote our own good and happineſs.

From all which the general concluſion follows, with the greateſt clearneſs and evidence: "That "there is a manifeſt difference betwixt one kind of "diſpoſition and conduct of men, and another; ac- "cording to which the One is Good, the Other Evil; "even tho' no Law did enjoin the one, or forbid the "other: and this difference is as certain and un- "changeable, as that betwixt light and darkneſs, "a bitter and ſweet taſte; the one no more ariſes "from, or is alterable by, the meer Will and plea- "ſure of any, than the other."

From what has been diſcours'd on this Argument it may appear: That, it is doing moſt uſeful ſervice to the publick, and to particular perſons, and even tranſgreſſors themſelves; for every one, in his proper ſtation, and as he has opportunity, to uſe the beſt methods in his power for putting a ſtop to the torrent of vice, and promoting a Reformation of Manners: and that they who join together in Societies for this purpoſe, that they may the better be aſſiſting to one another in it, are engaged in a good cauſe.

What pity is it, if ſo good a deſign is ever expoſed to reproach; by a wrong, or indiſcreet management of it? This, therefore, I hope You, who are engag'd in Reforming Societies, will carefully guard againſt, in all inſtances.

There is one caution, particularly; which ſeems to me of ſuch importance, that I hope you'll forgive me if I cannot but put you in mind of it: namely, that tho' there are other methods proper to be uſed for reclaiming our neighbours from any thing that is amiſs in them, as inſtruction, perſuaſion, and the influence of a good example; yet the method of puniſhing offenders, is to be confined to ſuch crimes of the vicious as are hurtful to others about them, or

diſturb

diſturb the peace of human ſociety. And therefore, you are carefully to beware, that, under pretence of puniſhing crimes, you do not unjuſtly reſtrain men from the free exerciſe of their natural and unalienable right of enquiring for themſelves in affairs of religion; and acting agreeably to the light of their own minds; ſo far as it does not lead them to commit any matter of wrong or wicked leudneſs, by which their neighbours are injured, or their natural or civil rights invaded. It would certainly be a moſt aukward and inconſiſtent thing; if they who ſet themſelves to bear down and ſuppreſs vice; ſhould, under that colour, ſet themſelves to ſuppreſs by methods of violence the exerciſe of a right, without the exerciſe of which in ſome meaſure there could be no virtue; the right of Conſcience, and private judgment in matters of religion: how abſurd and inconſiſtent would it be, if the members of ſocieties for reformation of manners ſhould themſelves, and pretending to act in that character too, be guilty of the greateſt iniquity and injuſtice? ſhould become *perſecutors and injurious?* or permit themſelves to be made the inſtruments or patrons of any motion or attempt to deprive their fellow-ſubjects of any of their valuable liberties and privileges; or infringe any of thoſe natural or civil rights, in the poſſeſſion and exerciſe of which 'tis the proper office of the Civil Magiſtrate to protect and defend all Good Subjects?

Among many evils, and characters of degeneracy, to be *lamented* in the preſent age; there is one very great bleſſing, which all good men have ground to *rejoice in:* that the principles of liberty, the rights of conſcience and private judgment, are better underſtood, and more regarded, than (for any any thing I know) they have ever been in former times; and I believe I may adventure to ſay no leſs, if not more, in *Great Britain*, than in any o-the Country under the Sun. While this happineſs con-

continues among us, as I hope it will continue, ſpread, and grow; eſpecially while we are under the protection of a government which, in the making of Laws and the adminiſtration of juſtice, acts with ſuch a ſacred regard to *theſe rights*; we may hope that valuable improvements, in all uſeful knowledge, ſhall take place; while the great barrs againſt a free and impartial enquiry, ariſing from a regard to worldly intereſt and the fear of man's judgment, are remov'd: and when truth in religion and morality obtains a fair tryal, reaſon and argument free ſcope, we may expect that impoſtures of all kinds ſhall be more and more detected; the kingdom of darkneſs, which has been chiefly ſupported by methods of violence, and the interpoſal of the ſecular arm in affairs of conſcience, ſhall be more and more weaken'd; falſe reaſoning, and ill-plac'd raillery and buffoonery, will not long ſtand the teſt, but one time or other expoſe themſelves; and the folly and abſurdity of thoſe ſhall more and more appear, *who call evil good, and good evil*, &c.

Only it concerns us to take great care that we *uſe not our liberty for a cloak of licentiouſneſs* *: that we don't make uſe of that liberty we have, and ought to have, of acting *agreeably* to the dictates of our conſciences, *without fear of man's judgment*; as a pretence to cover over acting *contrary* to the dictates of our conſciences, *without fear of the righteous judgment of God.* If ſuch licentiouſneſs ever hurries men on to the committing matter of wrong or wicked leudneſs againſt others; the Governing powers in civil ſociety, who are guardians of the publick peace, have a right, and 'tis their duty, to reſtrain it by proper animadverſions and puniſhments ſuited to the nature of the offence.

But there are other methods, as I have already obſerv'd, proper to be uſed by all, as they have op-

* 1 Pet. 2, 16.

opportunity, for reclaiming their neighbours from whatever is wrong in their temper or behaviour: the methods of inſtruction, and perſuaſion; and the influence of a good and engaging example. In all theſe it particularly becomes the members of reforming ſocieties to ſhow themſelves *patterns of good Works* *: and 'tis the buſineſs of every good man, to ſecond their laudable endeavours. Particularly as the moſt effectual way of introducing and promoting a general reformation, is for every man to reform one; and a good example is, by the bleſſing of God, of great influence for gaining and reclaiming offenders; every one may contribute ſome part towards a general reformation of manners, by amending whatever is amiſs in himſelf, and ſhowing forth in an exemplary behaviour the beauty and amiableneſs of holineſs and goodneſs: and it eſpecially becomes the Diſciples of JESUS, to *depart from iniquity* †; and to *let* their *light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee* their *good works, and glorify* their *Father who is in heaven* ‖.

It would alſo contribute very much to the promoting a general Reformation of Manners; if Maſters of families would take ſuch care, as their place enables and obliges them to do, of the manners of their domeſticks; particularly, by a more careful and diligent practice of that important, but much neglected, duty of family-inſtruction: and if Parents, and others to whom the education of young ones is committed, would lay out their main care in forming their Minds. This is the foundation on which an effectual Reformation of Manners muſt be built. There is nothing, indeed, has a more diſmal aſpect upon the riſing age; than the general diſſoluteneſs of the Youth: this (together with a certain Vanity of diſtinguiſhing themſelves ſome way, when a regard to a valuable reputation is gone) prompts them to ſwallow and eſpouſe the moſt looſe and

* Tit. 2. 7. † 2 Tim. 2. 19. ‖ Mat. 5. 16.

and diſſolute principles; and lays them open to the ſnares laid for them by any deſigning ſeducer, who will favour them with a ſhallow argument, a merry ſtory, or a ſordid jeſt; which they may have in readineſs to oppoſe to any ſober admonition or grave argument laid before them by others, or any remaining checks of their own conſciences.

I cannot help aſcribing this general Corruption of Youth, in a great meaſure, to the groſs and general neglect of a rational and virtuous Education. How many, alas! take more care of the training of their Dogs and Horſes, than of their Children and Heirs? and, even among thoſe who are not altogether careleſs and negligent of the education of their Children, how much of that concern which ſhould be laid out in forming their Minds, is altogether ſpent in teaching them things that are of no uſe to them in the way of life for which they are deſigned; or, at beſt, training them up in accompliſhments which are trifling and inconſiderable, in compariſon of a good and virtuous mind? And I ſpeak it with very great concern; I cannot help being apprehenſive that the looſeneſs and debauchery ſo much lamented in many, who are obſerved to have had the benefit of a Religious Education; may often be found to proceed in a great meaſure from that very Education itſelf, as 'tis managed: for I may appeal to attentive obſervers, whether that which obtains the name of religious education, does not often turn out in ſuch a ſhape as this? The care of Parents, or Inſtructors, about the religious part of Education, is almoſt wholly ſpent in inculcating upon young ones the *Shibboleth* of a Party; making them acquainted with, and inſtilling into them a regard for, the particular doctrines or peculiar forms of their own Sect; in which there may oft-times be found a mixture of things abſurd or trifling; which yet are inculcated with as great earneſtneſs, and by the ſame methods, with the moſt weighty and important points;

while great pains are taken to inſpire in them at the ſame time a ſtrong averſion to thoſe of another way of thinking, and that by methods which even a Childiſh capacity may diſcern to be contrary to equity and charity: and inſtead of forming their minds to a rational ſenſe of Good and Evil, a taſte and reliſh for true Piety and Virtue, upon ſuch principles as will ſtand the teſt of a moſt ſtrict examination; any inſtances of good practice they are taught, are recommended and enforced by meer authority; or by the awe of future rewards and puniſhments; which, as they are made uſe of without ever explaining the nature and juſtice of them, can contribute no more to promote a liberal piety and virtue, a reliſh for true goodneſs and ſavour of honeſty in the mind, than Whips and Sugar-plumbs: while, in all the offices of religion to which they are accuſtomed they are *detained before the Lord* * againſt their will; forced to run the round of certain forms, they know no good in; no care being taken to inſtill into them a juſt ſenſe and liking of true piety and devotion, or a regard to any valuable purpoſe in ſuch obſervances ſave only the pleaſing of their Parents; whoſe devotion and piety, at the ſame time, they obſerve to be exerted in ſuch a way as tends to give them no amiable and inviting, but rather a diſguſting and forbidding, view of it: and all the while, their kind and generous affections are rather check'd, than forwarded and improv'd; while every ſelfiſh paſſion and appetite, inſtead of being regularly check'd and corrected, is rather in many caſes humour'd and encouraged; only the exerciſe of them in ſome particular inſtances is reſtrained, not by any rational endeavours to cure the wrong turn in the temper, but by poſitive precepts as to ſuch and ſuch particular inſtances; and by an awe and conſtraint, which the young one knows he ſhall one time get rid of, and longs to be delivered from.

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* 1 Sam. 21: 7.

Is this to *train up a Child in the way that he ſhould go?* What muſt be expected to be the conſequence, when a young thing, with the ſmall portion of common ſenſe ſuch a tutoring has left him, and with warm blood and ſtrong paſſions, gets out into an enſnaring World? when a creature thus (neglected, ſhall I ſay, or rather) with great care miſguided, comes to be emancipated from ſuch fetters, and get rid of ſuch aukward reſtraints? when the raw unform'd Youth comes once (as, perhaps, with a ſcanty portion of underſtanding and very ſlender exerciſe of reaſon he may) to diſcover a flaw or weakneſs in ſome things that, it may be, he has been taught to look upon as equally ſacred with God and Virtue, Goodneſs and Honeſty; muſt it not be natural for him upon ſuch a diſcovery, with the concurrence of wild paſſions uſed to no regular government, to draw very general and haſty concluſions? to throw up at once every thing he has been formerly taught; and which his Education has furniſh'd him with nothing to ſay for, more than for ſome things he has now found to be trifling and abſurd? to abandon a courſe which, both by inſtruction and example, he has been taught to be troubleſome and painful; and betake himſelf to a way of life which his Appetites tell him is moſt delightful, but from which hitherto he has been rigorouſly reſtrained?

I'm afraid we may deſpair of ſeeing any general reformation among the Youth, 'till ſuch groſs faults in their Education be amended: and till the firſt and chief care in training up of young ones be imployed in forming their Minds right. Great pains muſt be taken to inſtill into them, according as their capacities gradually open, ſome underſtanding of the nature of true goodneſs and virtue; good thoughts of God, and of the obligations we are under to him; juſt notions of the nature of *pure and undefiled Religion*, as 'tis founded in a ſenſe of the unalterable difference betwixt moral Good and Evil, and the belief

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of a perfectly good God; together with ſome juſt underſtanding of the natural tendency and influence of true piety and virtue prevailing in the heart, to the preſent improvement pleaſure and ſatisfaction of the mind, and to the ſettled peace and tranquillity of the whole life. And with this care to inform their judgements, muſt be joined the moſt careful and engaging endeavours, to form their minds to a taſte and reliſh of true goodneſs, virtue and piety: not only by deſcribing to them, as clearly and fully as their capacities will allow, ſome of the inward enjoyments ariſing from them; but alſo by putting them upon reflecting on any experience or feeling of that kind they themſelves may have had, and leading them gently and by winning methods to make trial in ſome inſtances; and thus gradually training them to ſome experience of this ſort: but above all, by the influence of a good example, affording them an eaſy familiar and engaging view of the Beauty of holineſs and goodneſs; ſuch an example of exact conformity to the ſeveral rules of *pure and undefiled religion*, as may ſet true piety, and the ſeveral virtues to which it animates, before their eyes in its native amiableneſs; and ſhow them that it is a moſt kind and benign, a moſt happy and comfortable, thing. In all which, great care muſt be taken to ſuit the manner of inſtruction and perſuaſion to the gradual opening of their capacities, to their tempers and the ſeveral inclinations they early diſcover; heedfully catching at all advantages afforded by the natural kindneſs and tenderneſs of their tempers, and any little ſparks of goodneſs, and a ſenſe of what is fair and beautiful in manners, they ſhow of their own accord.

Perhaps I have enlarged upon this Subject, beyond the proportion which falls to its ſhare in ſuch a diſcourſe as this: but, methinks, not beyond its Importance, to a General Reformation of Manners.

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